



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Assistant Majority Leader Kevin de León Lauds Governor for Signing Air Quality Measure Containing his Smog Abatement Fee Proposal

(Los Angeles, CA) On the last night to sign and veto bills yesterday, Governor Schwarzenegger signed an omnibus air quality bill which contained the Assistant Majority Leader's proposal from AB 255 to fund smog reduction programs through an increase to the smog abatement fee. The De León proposal was one of several pieces of AB 118 carried by Speaker Fabian Núñez. Added together, AB 118 will raise more than \$200 million per year for smog reduction programs and the research and development of clean energy technology.

"Serving a district criss-crossed by six major freeways, its imperative that we invest more resources in reducing smog and developing long-term solutions to breaking our addiction to the foreign oil fueling that poisonous air," said Assistant Majority Leader Kevin de León. "I applaud both the Governor and the Speaker for enacting this important step in that direction and I look forward to continuing that collaboration and this important work next year. The health of tens of thousands of children in my district depends upon it."

Currently in California, air pollution is a major public health epidemic causing premature deaths, permanent lung damage, skyrocketing asthma rates and other respiratory illnesses. Children are particularly vulnerable to health risks associated with air pollution. In Los Angeles County alone, asthma is responsible for over 12,000 hospitalizations annually, with most of those patients being children. Furthermore, asthma is the leading cause for elementary school absenteeism, and hospitalizations for such illnesses cost California's economy billions of dollars every year in health care expenses and lost productivity.

Automobile emissions are not only a leading cause of smog, they're not only the leading source of greenhouse gases causing world-wide climate changes, according to the U.N.'s IPCC climate change report, but also the source of potentially catastrophic environmental changes here in California. Our energy needs are becoming increasingly more reliant upon foreign oil. Relying on foreign fuel from extremely volatile and unpredictable markets is a major threat to California's economic stability and our long-term economic interests.

Assembly Bill 118 would, among other things, increase the Smog Abatement Fee from \$12 to \$20. The Smog Abatement Fee is a fee that owners of car models six years or newer pay to opt out of the smog check requirement. The Smog Abatement Fee was set at \$12 two years ago when it was slipped into a budget bill with little to no debate. The eight dollar increase would still provide car owners a savings over having to pay for a smog check while generating an estimated \$90 million annually alone to help clean our air, reduce global warming, as well as our dependency on foreign oil.

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